Comprehensive plan for judicial reforms

1812. SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA: Will the Minister of LAW, JUSTICE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have chalked out any comprehensive plan for judicial system reforms during the current year and the Ninth Plan period;

(b) if so, the details of major policy decision taken recently in this direction; and

(c) what has been the response of State Governments to the reform proposals including financial autonomy to judiciary?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING AND MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF LAW, JUSTICE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI ARUN JAITLEY): (a) to (c) Judicial reforms are a continuous process. Various steps have been taken by the Government for the speedy disposal of both civil and criminal cases. These include amendment of the Civil Procedure Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure, increase in the number of posts of Judges/Judicial Officers, establishment of Special Courts/tribunals, appointment of Special Judicial/ Metropolitan Magistrates and adoption of alternative modes of dispute resolution, such as, arbitration and conciliation. Lok Adalats have been given a statutory base as supplementary forum for resolution of disputes. There is increased use of Information Technology in courts in the country.

The Code of Civil Procedure (Amendment) Bill, 1999 after obtaining the assent of the President is awaiting notification. The Criminal Procedure Code (Amendment) Bill, 1994 is under consideration of Parliament. The Law Commission in its 154th report has recommended a number of measures for the speedy disposal of criminal cases. Such of recommendations which do not require any amendment of law or statute have been forwarded to the State Governments/UT Administrations for necessary action at their end. The State Governments/UT Administrations are also periodically requested to take necessary action to expedite speedy disposal of cases involving under-trial prisoners on the basis of Supreme Court's directions in this regard.

During the current year an amount of Rs. 74.95 crore has been allocated under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme for the development of infrastructural facilities for the Judiciary for the construction of court buildings and residential accommodation for judges and judical officers. This is higher than the allocation

under the Scheme during previous years. The XI Finance Commission has also recommended an allocation of Rs. 502.90 crore for setting up of 1,734 additional courts which are expected to clear about 2 million criminal cases during 2001-2005.

Periodically matter is taken up with the State Governments regarding judicial reforms concerning them and the grant of more financial powers to the respective High Courts. Most of the State Governments have taken steps for judicial reforms. Some of the State Governments like Karnataka, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Sikkim, etc. have delegated more financial powers to their respective High Courts.

Mandatory use of Electronic Voting Machine

1813. SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA: Will the Minister of LAW, JUSTICE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are considering to make mandatory use of Electronic Voting Machine and Identity Cards in the forth coming election as part of comprehensive poll reforms;

(b) if so, the details of the proposals finalised and the financial implications thereof and the time frame for implementation;

(c) whether the reform proposals have been discussed with the State Governments/National and Regional Political Parties and if so, their reaction to the proposals; and

(d) the present status of Electoral Reforms?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING AND MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF LAW, JUSTICE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI ARUN JAITLEY): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

(d) The Government is committed to bring necessary reforms in electoral laws pertaining to election to Parliament and legislatures of the States. The President also, in his Address to the Parliament, at the commencement of the first session after constitution of the 13th Lok Sabha, had stressed the necessity of bringing comprehensive reforms in the electoral laws of the country as priority subject for the present Government. In view of the political instability